LA REVISTA
The British Spanish Society magazine

Tamara Rojo – Xabi Alonso – The Islands of Spain – Basque Politics – Jorge Semprún
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Welcome back! You might notice that these pages look a little different. Barcelona resident and Dutch graphic designer Deborah van Mourik has refreshed the layout – I hope you like it.

In this issue we speak to Tamara Rojo CBE, veteran ballet dancer, artistic director of the English National Ballet, and champion of the arts, about her inspiring career and plans for the future – she won the BritishSpanish Society’s Culture Award as part of the centenary celebrations in 2016.

We reflect on the spectacular meeting of two tennis greats earlier this year: Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer, who proved that they are both still at the top of their game. We wouldn’t want to neglect Spain’s favourite sport though; turn to page 15 for our interview with footballer Xabi Alonso, his brother Mikel and their father Periko – clearly football runs in the family.

As a registered charity, the BritishSpanish Society is proud to support the studies of post-graduate students with scholarships and bursaries every year. Caroline Gray, 2015 winner of a Society/BBVA scholarship, tells us about her research into the regional financing systems of Spain and their impact on Basque and Catalan nationalist party strategies. Read more on page 20.

Many of us are familiar with Spain’s islands, but consider visiting in the winter months if you haven’t already. See Dominic Begg’s overview on page 34, and if you visit Menorca be sure to pay a visit to Isla del Rey, home to one of the oldest Royal Navy hospitals in the world, which played a crucial role in British military history and has recently been restored by a dedicated team of volunteers (page 29). Enjoy the issue.

COVER IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET
TAMARA ROJO IN GUSELE PHOTO BY JASON BELL

WITH THANKS TO THE BRITISH SPANISH SOCIETY’S PRINCIPAL SUPPORTERS:
JOHN OF GAUNT
DUKE OF LANCASTER:
THE RIGHTFUL KING OF CASTILE
(1369-1388)

BY ÓSCAR PEREA-RODRÍGUEZ

Spaniards often feel surprised when they see the drawing reproduced above, ascribed (erroneously as it seems, but that is another story) to Lucas Cornelisz van Kunst, the successful Dutch painter of the Tudor era. A brief glance to John of Gaunt’s portrait suffices to notice the distinctive coat of arms of the English members of the Plantagenet dynasty: three golden passant lions on gules and a few fleur-de-lys. However, there is a small shield right in the middle with the double quartered of castles and lions, a heraldry figure that even today is associated with the official coat of arms of Spain.

The inscription in Latin at the right upper corner completes the Spaniards’ wonderment: the nobleman is indeed Johannes filius quartus Edvardi tertii Rex Castella et Legione Dux Lancastriæ (John, fourth son of Edward the Third, King of Castile and León, Duke of Lancaster). How did the son of an English monarch become the ruler of a Spanish kingdom?

The Crown of Castile and León was turned into a battlefield in 1365. King Pedro I, son and legitimate heir of Alfonso XI (who died in 1350), was betrayed by most of the nobility. They preferred to side with the king’s illegitimate brother, Count Henry of Trastámara, offspring of Alfonso XI and his mistress, Leonor de Guzmán. These two siblings did not hesitate in asking other European monarchs for help in the fratricidal war. Whilst Henry signed a military pact with France, Pedro I achieved a commitment with Edward III to add English troops to his cause. Through these alliances, the Castilian civil conflict was also an episode integrated within the Hundred Years War that devastated Europe for more than a century.

In 1369, the Count of Trastámara defeated the Anglo-Castilian army in the battle of Montiel and killed his brother shortly afterwards. Despite having power de facto, the new king, crowned as Enrique II, lacked legitimacy.
Edward III took advantage of this and moved rapidly with his diplomacy skills, arranging the marriage of his son, John of Gaunt, and Princess Constance of Castile, elder daughter and inheritor of Pedro I. Thus, the Duke of Lancaster began to call himself King of Castile and León, for he was king de iure due to the rights transmitted by his wife.

John of Gaunt patiently waited 15 years before pushing to achieve his Castilian dream. The opportunity came in 1385, when Juan I (son and heir of Enrique II, died in 1379) was defeated at Aljubarrota by the Grandmaster of the Order of Aviz, who proclaimed himself King João I of Portugal. Following an identical pattern to his father, the Duke ensured the alliance with the new Portuguese monarch by offering his daughter, Philippa of Lancaster, as a bride. John of Gaunt asked for one thing only in return: military help in order to invade Spain and claim the Castilian throne in his favor.

In July 1386, Galician residents should have felt the astonishment of those Spaniards watching the Duke’s portrait. The scene occurred in A Coruña, a destination of pilgrims who came to Spain through the English itinerary of the Way of St James. In those days, A Coruña received a number of extraneous vessels, whose leader declared to be himself the rightful king of Castile and León. Although his men were carrying banners with a radiant Anglo-Castilian coat of arms, he did not get much popular support. Thus he schemed a clever but deplorable alternative plan: taking the road to Santiago de Compostela disguised as a pilgrim visiting the saint’s tomb during the saint’s feast day, July 25. Due to this devious act, some historians used to refer to the Duke as “the least penitential pilgrim ever”.

After the Compostellan masquerade, John of Gaunt and his military retinue spent the summer in Ourense, where they occupied some houses by force, quite an ineffective move considering how much he needed the love of his subjects. When the promised Portuguese military aid arrived there, the two armies marched south together, but they were defeated by Castilian troops in 1387, at the small town of Valderrás, León. The Duke of Lancaster realized then his total failure: a foreigner supported by foreign soldiers alone cannot seize the throne of a kingdom in which he has zero sympathizers. The two monarchs, de iure and de facto, began to negotiate peace. By the Treaty of Bayona (1388), Prince Henry of Castile, son and heir of Juan I who would be crowned as Enrique III, married Catherine of Lancaster, John of Gaunt’s daughter. It would be Catherine (Catalina de Lancaster in Spanish), who eventually fulfilled her father’s aspirations because she did become Queen of Castile, being the maternal grandmother of Isabella, the Catholic Queen.

The Bayona Treaty put an end to the Duke of Lancaster’s Spanish adventure, yet we still have his coat of arms as a vivid memory of his royal but ephemeral dream, a wonderful one while it lasted.